

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, June 26, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Paris, France.
June 26, 1895. My darling Alec:

I have just received two such nice letters, one from you and one from Mr. McCurdy and I must write you at once, although I sent you a letter this afternoon.

Dear, I love you and it's lovely of you to take so much trouble to write me such long letters. I know how fine your writing is and that a line of it contains as much as most peoples two or three, so mine tonight is a pretty long one and must have taken you a long time to write. An only criticism I must make and that is that it contained neither beginning or end. It may only be a collection of "Items for Mabel", but Mabel would like just a little greeting from her Alec. — say — "Dear Mabel— Here are some items which will at least show you I think of you, etc. — Your loving Alec". Words like this surely wouldn't take up much time and I like you to say, How do you do, to me, even if you are only calling informally and not in state as it were.

Now for the letter. I don't understand all your details about your $V = -O$, $V = - ? g[??]$, $V = - i$, but I have no doubt that your researches must bear on chemistry. Sir Isaac Newton must have been an awfully clever man and when I come to write of some great discovery I think I have made I will be sure to follow his example and separate my observed facts from my hypothesis! It really does seem the only proper way to write a scientific book when you come to think of it and I think you certainly would do well to follow his example. In this way your 2 observations as well as his will be valuable for all time, and I am sure not Sir Isaac himself or any other man has observed more minutely and carefully than you and few can write of what you see in simpler and clearer language. I don't think I am stupid, indeed I think I could understand things puzzling to ordinary readers, but I don't often take that

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trouble, so that if you succeed in making things clear to me to read as I run, any one else can do so and your language is proved to be very clear.

I don't object to the glass tubes at Beinn Bhreagh for tea, coffee, etc., while I am not there except that I would like to be sure that they are thoroughly cleaned. They are not as easily cleaned as ordinary spoons. But I do decidedly object to your taking up your quarters permanently at the laboratory and getting your meals anyhow. Please don't do that. No one can stand such irregularity of life very long. You know you came to me nearly wrecked by just such living some eighteen years ago and if you could not stand it then you certainly can't now. I think I will cable you tomorrow. The only thing is you will be going to Flint soon. Only there you will be yet worse off. I am frightened when I think of it and almost ready to drop my children and go after you. By the way, it is time they came home now. It's near ten. Suppose they don't get home until after that, what will happen? Mademoiselle Fillipi has taken them to the Fair at Nienilly with some French friends of her's. She is such a devotee of the convent here that Madame le Mere I am sure will figure her a little infraction of the rules. Still I want my chickens back. They were to have gone the other day, 3 but the Government ordered the Fair closed on account of the National mourning for M. Carnot. It is at the other end of the Bois de Boulogne and Charles is on duty so they are all right, but my little parlor feels empty without my two big girls. Madame le Mere scolded us all three only this morning for being so habitually late for meals.

Here is an observation for you. My lamp wick is not properly trimmed and one end sends up a long flame curving up close to the glass chimney. It has not blacked the chimney right overhead, but at one side. A photograph of the curving flame appears in lamp-black on the chimney so— Why should this effect be produced? My chickens have returned. They had a good time and did not want to come away as they liked their French friends and the illuminations had hardly begun.

Tomorrow morning at eight, twenty-one of the Convent Maidens take their first communion and we have to be up betimes, so I will not write any more tonight.

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Where and when will this reach you? I don't know how to address it, having no idea how long you stay in Flint. To think of its being 92 in Baddeck. 78 seems to be the highest we can attain here.

Thursday— We got up at seven this morning and were in chapel at a quarter to eight and saw the girls march in in their fresh white muslin dresses and veils, courtesy in twos before the altar and then pass to right and left to their places. Nothing could be prettier than these young girls, fresh-faced in their pure white dresses, their young fair faces framed in by tiny little white muslin caps tied with white 4 satin bows under their round chins. They were all in white, white gloves, white prayer books, white shoes and stockings. They were flanked right and left as they sat in the middle of the church by the sweet-faced nuns in their beautiful costume, purple robe, white veils and long white trailing mantle on which is a large purple cross over the left breast. The dainty chapel, one of the most satisfactory I ever was in, white-walled and beautifully arched, formed a most appropriate background to a beautiful “mise en scene”, the only discordant note in which seemed to be the variegated costumes of friends and relatives clustered in the aisles and around the pillars. Presently the priests entered up the middle aisle and went through a great ceremony of dressing before the altar. First the chief priest donned a white towel which he pinned under his neck across his shoulders. Then came a white lace chemise, then an apron which he tied behind over the chemise. Then another priest handed him some kind of medal on a ribbon which he kissed and then hung around his neck. Next came a magnificent chasub of cloth of gold embroidered and finally sleeves of the same were put on, and Monseigneur was ready to receive his golden shepherds crook, and turn to his flock and address them on their new duties and responsibilities. It took him rather a long time to do this to his satisfaction and Daisy, whose breakfast had been left unfinished, began to feel deep sympathy for the young communicants who hadn't had any at all and remarked that he beat a Scotch Presbyterian minister all hollow. But the longest sermons do end sometimes and then the girls began taking off their gloves and Madame la Superieure took her place at their head. The priests prepared the holy food and coming down the steps, the three 5

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of them, one with a golden cup, another with a plate, a third with a lighted candle, awaited the girls at the communion table. This was a narrow bench covered with lace and over that a fine white cloth. With bowed heads and clasped hands the young girls walked slowly one after the other up the aisles, were received by Madame and made to kneel in fours to receive the bread. Then she drew their veils down over their faces as they had previously been flung back over the head, and they returned to their seats as they came. After all the first communicants had partaken, the elder girls in white wool dresses and muslin veils came and pulled down their veils in the same way. Then followed the relatives of the girls, first ladies then gentlemen and boys and then the priests returned to the altar and began disrobing. My attention was however distracted at that moment, a little boy just in front of us suddenly fell to the floor, unconscious and ghostly pale. His father picked him up and began unfastening his collar and finally carried him out, and the mother said afterwards it was only a faint, but the scene reminded me of Elsie's convulsions and was very painful. He was a nice little boy too, poor little fellow. After the priests had disrobed they returned as they came. The girls marched out, kneeling first at the altar and then came the nuns, their beautiful long robes trailing behind. I would almost like to be a nun for the privilege of wearing such a beautiful dress. They all have very calm cheerful faces and some are strong in their perfect repose and others very saintly. A few too are simply good-humored unintellectual. One of the nuns has a most beautiful voice the children say, and she looked a very St. Cecelia standing high above us behind the carved white balustrade of the organ loft, her pale saintly face and it's white hood the only thing visible against the darker white walls around. The whole ceremony was most beautiful and impressive, but I liked best that saintly nun's face up on high.

We go to Sevres today to the porcelain manufactory. I saw Professor Langley at Munro's. He is "coming to call".

Yours ever.